

13 Theme

GLCE RN106.03



Getting the Idea

A **theme** is the larger message about life that an author conveys in a story. It is the main idea. The theme is presented through the characters, the action, and the setting of a story. It may or may not be stated directly, and often must be discovered by the reader.

To find the theme:

- Begin with the title. The title can tell a lot about the story and may tell about the theme.
- Read carefully and look for information “between the lines.”
- Pay attention to things that are repeated again and again. An idea, a problem, or a lesson that appears more than once might be a clue to the theme.
- If an object appears again and again, it might have deeper meaning. The object may stand for an important part of the theme. Think about what the object might represent.

Guided Example

DIRECTIONS

Read this passage and answer the questions that follow. The hints can help you find the correct answers.

A Gift to the Hummingbird

A Mayan Legend



The hummingbird was created by the Great Spirit. The hummingbird had no bright colors, yet she didn't mind. She took pride in her flying skill and was happy with her life despite her looks.

When it came time to be married, the hummingbird had neither a wedding gown nor a necklace. Some of her best friends decided to create a wedding dress and jewelry as a surprise. The vermilion-crowned flycatcher gave red feathers to the hummingbird for her necklace. The bluebird donated several blue feathers for her gown. The motmot gave blue and emerald green feathers and the cardinal gave some red ones.

Then the oriole sewed up all the plumage into an exquisite wedding gown for the little hummingbird.

When the wedding day arrived, the hummingbird was so happy and grateful that she could barely twitter her vows. The Great Spirit was so impressed by her humble, honest soul that he let hummingbird wear her wedding gown for the rest of her life. To this day, the hummingbird wears her beautiful feathers all because of a humble bird so long ago.



Thinking It Through

- How would you describe the character of the hummingbird?
 - beautiful and arrogant
 - selfish and jealous
 - humble and grateful
 - plain and unattractive
- What is the theme of this story?
 - Humility will be rewarded.
 - Beauty is important.
 - Ask for things and you will get them.
 - Birds are like people.

HINT

Look for the adjectives associated with the hummingbird.

HINT

The description of the hummingbird will help you find the theme.

Lesson Practice

Guided Reading

Read the story below. While you are reading, look for the theme.

How Selfishness Was Rewarded

A Tlingit Legend

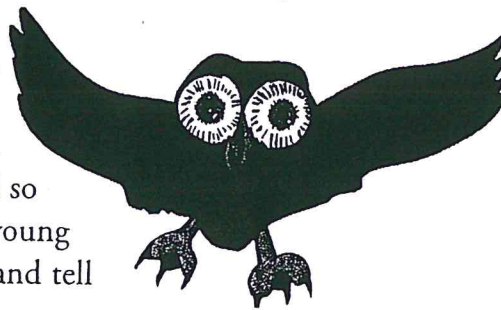
One summer a young warrior, his wife, and mother came to live by the coast. The warrior laid nets and set traps in the water, but caught nothing. He wandered many miles hunting for food, but he found nothing. The family had barely enough food to survive.

Very early one morning the old mother came to her son and told him a sad and cruel story. The night before, the starving old woman saw her son's wife crouched near the fire eagerly eating hot fish. When the old mother begged for just a single bite, the girl refused.

The next day, the young warrior went out hunting. When he returned, he had a fat seal. At midnight he used a magic spell to call for fish and collected a basketful. The next morning the warrior and his mother were eating fish when the young woman awoke.

The young girl became afraid of her husband's wrath. She left the lodge and went running toward the mountains. Suddenly feathers began to sprout from her body. In fear, the young girl realized the magic she had used so selfishly was now working on her. She was transformed completely into an owl. The warrior reached out for her, only to see her fly away.

The evil magic she had used so selfishly had taken her. All the young warrior could do was to return and tell his mother what had happened.



Reading Guide

How does the title of this story give you a clue to its theme?

Can you identify any repeated ideas?

What is the lesson in this story?

Independent Practice**DIRECTIONS**

Use the story to answer each question. Circle the letter beside the best answer.

1. How would you describe the character of the young woman?
 - A. intelligent and magical
 - B. magical and giving
 - C. evil and hateful
 - D. selfish and cowardly

2. Which of the following sentences helps to develop the theme?
 - A. The family had barely enough food to survive.
 - B. The young warrior had carefully memorized the spell.
 - C. One summer a young warrior, his wife, and mother came to live by the coast.
 - D. When the old mother begged for just a simple bite, the girl refused.

3. How did the setting help to develop the theme?
 - A. Food was plentiful.
 - B. Others living nearby took care of the young warrior's family.
 - C. Food was scarce and the family was starving.
 - D. The family could always go shopping.

4. What is the theme of "*How Selfishness Was Rewarded*"?
 - A. Love can heal all hurts.
 - B. Selfishness can destroy you.
 - C. Always eat enough food.
 - D. Take care of the people you love.